

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE LA PORTE COUNTY COUNCIL

January 24, 2022 at 6:00PM

The regular meeting of the La Porte County Council was held on January 24, 2022 at 6:00pm (central time) in the Assembly Room of the La Porte County Government Complex located at 809 State Street, La Porte, Indiana, 46350.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm by the Council President, Randy Novak.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by President Novak.

ROLL CALL

Seven Council Members were physically present for the meeting (Mr. Novak, Mr. Yagelski, Mr. Mollenhauer, Mrs. Gramarossa, Mr. Cunningham, Mr. Rosenbaum, Mr. Garner).

APPROVAL OF THE JANUARY 24, 2022 AGENDA

- i. Motion made by Mr. Mollenhauer to add the following amendments and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum with the addition to remove # 1 under Old Business to discuss at a later date.
 - a. Add to New Business #9 Animal Control
 - b. Add to Old Business #3 EMS Pay
- ii. All members voted in favor.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES FROM DECEMBER 13, 2021; DECEMBER 21, 2021; AND JANUARY 3, 2022

- i. Motion to approve previously amended meeting minutes from December 13, 2021 made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mrs. Gramarossa.
- ii. All members voted in favor.
- iii. Motion to approve previously amended meeting minutes from December 21, 2021 made by Mr. Cunningham and seconded by Mr. Mollenhauer.
- iv. All members voted in favor.

- v. Motion to approve January 3, 2022 minutes, correcting under Nominations and Elections of Officers; #2 - section C, the number of members should be 6 and Mr. Rosenbaum needs to be added, made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mrs. Gramarossa.
- vi. All members voted in favor.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Steve Holifield, Mill Creek

Mr. Holifield stated the LIT tax is more of a city issue, than a county issue right now. He also said that taking more of the taxpayer's money is not the answer. He also stated that no one is saying that the fire and police don't deserve it; however, taxpayers are tired of paying the entire brunt of things. Mr. Holifield mentioned that there needs to be some leadership that makes tough decisions and the city is full of places that made those tough decisions. Those decisions were made; they were not popular, however, they and cut staff to save the business. As we have been told before by the county attorney, this is a \$40 million business. Let's start running it like a business.

Elizabeth Bergeron, Michigan City, Indiana

Mrs. Bergeron stated that on November 4th, 2021, it was brought to the Council's attention that Paladin needed funding. Two months later the funds still have not been released and she would like to know why. She went on to explain that these funds would help more La Porte County residents as well as increase job options. Mrs. Bergeron questioned how many County Council members have taken the time to tour Paladin and to meet with the CEO or speak with individuals and families whose lives are made better by Paladin. She expressed that ARP funds to the Paladin build out need to be released and regular funding needs to happen.

Mr. Novak stated Mrs. Gramarossa meets with Paladin regularly and he has spent a lot of time meeting with the staff. They are fully aware.

Doug Samuelson, President of the Fraternal Order of Police Lodge #75

Mr. Samuelson began by stating that he disagrees with Steve Holifield; it is not a city problem, it is a county problem. He stated that he was on the Michigan City Police Department for 22 years and that he fought for raises and there were many years they didn't get a raise. Mr. Samuelson went into detail that, currently, Michigan City has lost 24 officers to different departments and that the department can't get new help or new hires. The department used to get 25 to 30 recruits in to test out; however, now the department is lucky to get 6 or 7 in with maybe 2 qualified. He felt that losing these officers is a killer to the department and to the community. He noted that Commissioner Matias in a newspaper article was saying that the General Assembly is looking to eliminate the business personal property tax, which could cost the county about \$3.3 million by Commissioner Matias' numbers. He expressed that the Council needs to come up with a solution to all these problems and the LIT tax is the answer. He went on to say that Commissioner Mrozinski has talked about having the county go through the county accounts and figure out what money the county has. He felt that this was something the county should do at the beginning of the year. Also, he mentioned that Commissioner Haney didn't vote at the last meeting because he didn't know if it was legal or not. Doug wished the Commissioners would get

together and work together. As a retired officer and taxpayer of La Porte County, when he calls 911, he doesn't want a rookie.

For clarification, Mr. Novak informed Mr. Samuelson that the Commissioners don't handle finances; the Council does and that the Council knows how much is in the various funds.

Scott Wilson, La Porte City Firefighter

Scott started out by saying this is not a county issue; when there is a medical emergency, the La Porte County EMS is paid by the county to respond. The average age of the typical EMS employee is getting younger and younger. There is nothing better than experience on the job. The thing being you train these people, whether it's for Police, Fire or EMS and they go to another job. These departments are spending more money to train these people that don't have the experience. There's nothing more valuable than experienced First Responders in the county.

La Porte County Commission President, Sheila Matias

Commissioner Matias thanked the Council for raising the issue of pay for the First Responders. She felt that everyone was in agreement, First Responders need and deserve salary increases across La Porte County and they need to solve this problem once and for all. However, it is on the solution where we may differ. She believes if we form a coalition across the county with Mayors, Commissioners, Council members and leaders from all the cities and towns, State Legislators, Fire Departments and lobby the state for our fair share, the issue can be solved once and for all with a sustainable plan without increasing taxes. It was mentioned that there is a projected \$5.1 billion state surplus to be in place by June 30th, 2022. Why not create a State of Indiana First Responders trust fund that won't go away, where every governmental unit can draw annually for First Responder salaries, equipment and training? Let's be transparent and talk about money. There is \$21 million coming to our county from American Rescue Plan funds...\$12 million to the City of La Porte and \$12 million or \$11 million to MC. [Editor's note: The actual number is \$16.5 million.] Treasury's final rule allows one to use up to \$10 million as they wish. The county just gave 5 to 6 percent raise just like the cities have given raises. Keep in mind with ARP and the infrastructure bill bringing 10s of millions of new funds to our county, that takes pressure off the General Fund. Late November, the General Fund had \$5.6 million, ARP Fund had \$9.8 million, Riverboat \$2.6 million, Emergency Reserve Fund \$8 million, LIT had \$10.2 million, Major Moves Fund had \$5.6 million. Each fund is regulated by the state. Local officials can do interfund transfers to meet the needs. Thanks to the ARP Fund, we have breathing room.

La Porte County Commissioner, Joe Haney

Mr. Haney stated that the Council members were individually elected as Council people for the role of County Council and the body as a whole is La Porte County Council. First of all, he didn't believe the Commissioners have authority to tell the Council that they can't meet in person. He wanted to mention a news story on line that it was misquoted and a quote that was misattributed to him as well. For clarification, he said our local resolutions required 50% of a body to attend in person; so that's why he didn't vote, when it came to that resolution, and also indicated that it was more of a political resolution. His position on the LIT tax is that monies that are coming from the state, monies that are coming back to the people here in the state and here in our county come from the state surplus. That was money that

was already taken from the taxpayer of La Porte County. It is only right for that surplus to be returned the people, not the county. Speaking as a former EMT and volunteer firefighter, it is important that we pay our people what they deserve and what will keep them retained and keep them well sustained, he said.

Attorney Andrew Voeltz, La Porte, Indiana

Mr. Voeltz stated that the local income tax is an option that is under the laws of the State of Indiana. If there is a .50 % increase in the local income tax, for example, for someone that makes \$20,000 a year, it's an extra \$8.33 a month. Therefore, he doesn't see an issue. The money collected has to go to public safety meaning Fire, EMS, and Law Enforcement. Commissioner Matias' comment about \$5.1 billion down state, that's not \$5.1 billion La Porte is entitled to; it has to spread out to about 92 counties in the state. La Porte County is well below the state average in the local income tax rate. Using ARP money presents a Band-Aid for a situation. He stated the reality is we are the most underpaid county when it comes to an entry level deputy, who makes about \$39,000 a year. He said Hobby Lobby is paying \$18.50 to start for full time employees. That is \$37,000 a year plus benefits.

Former County Councilman Jeff Santana, Michigan City, Indiana

Mr. Santana thanked Mr. Novak for wearing a mask. And reminded the Council that Covid is not over. He said it was taking a big step by having a meeting and that the Council should lead by example.

Matt Drangmeister, President of Fraternal Order of Police Lodge #54

Mr. Drangmeister stated that he agrees with everything Doug Samuelson stated. It's more than just a city problem; it is a county problem now that the county is starting to see deputies looking for occupations elsewhere. He went on to say that they recently had 5 officers go to South Bend, due to the fact that the salary is higher than La Porte. They also have higher local income tax and property tax, so they can afford to pay more. So, when we compare, it's not comparing apples to apples. The City of La Porte has a minimum of 4 per shift and it can quickly be tied up. He noted that they experience it often. He also stated, for example, that they had a fatality accident and needed two officers to direct traffic. The two remaining officers went to another accident. During this time, they had a domestic call come in. One of the officers had to leave; therefore, a single officer had to go to the domestic, when it requires two officers. So, there was a delayed response time to the domestic. There are calls when response times are very important. If we can't make it quicker, he said a situation can get a lot worse. He mentioned President Samuelson's comment that he would like a veteran officer to show up to his calls. We are getting a lot of officers working in an ever-younger department. It means a bunch of young inexperienced officers running with a lot of younger officers and the young inexperienced officers are training other young inexperienced officers.

John Lake, La Porte County Prosecutor

Mr. Lake stated that the cost of solving crimes, when we are losing experienced officers and detectives that go elsewhere, can't be understated. Anything we can do to retain professionals with long term experience is really important.

PUBLIC COMMENT OPEN FLOOR CLOSED.

DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORTS

Jay Sullivan, La Porte County Engineer

Mr. Sullivan requested to be allowed to spend Restricted MVH money for the finishing of the Cougar Road Contract between US 20 and SR 2, for asphalt and tac coat. The amount would be \$54,697.13.

Mr. Novak asked if that was an overrun and to which part?

Mr. Sullivan stated that initially INDOT wanted to put in a turn lane; then they put in a stop light on the North part on 20. They bid to put in a turn lane. Mr. Sullivan also mentioned that they decided to mill 2 and half inches off and put 3 inches of fill in on Cougar Road. The additional cost wasn't part of the original turn lane only bid. The additional cost includes asphalt, tac coat, stripping and everything that goes with that.

Mr. Yagelski stated that when this was brought to the Council last year, the Council asked the total cost and was told yes it was included and, therefore, they should not be doing any additional work without coming back to the Council and no one was in agreement with this; this isn't coming from the Council. It's a cost overrun and they better figure out how they are going to pay for it.

Mr. Rosenbaum asked who authorized the milling and resurfacing, because that wasn't in the original contract. We would have had to find out about it to be able to pay for it.

Mr. Sullivan replied it was the County Highway Department and himself.

Mr. Yagelski asked Mr. Novak if they could please have Highway Department Superintendent Duane Werner join them, as "I know this is not true."

Mr. Werner was asked to come up.

Mr. Yagelski asked Mr. Werner if he had ever mentioned to him that they were going over the initial cost on this project.

Mr. Werner answered no.

Mr. Yagelski asked if Mr. Werner approved it.

Mr. Werner replied that he didn't know what the extra cost was.

Mr. Yagelski stated that it was a cost overrun and they never came to the Council.

- i. Motion to **deny** made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Garner.

Mr. Rosenbaum suggested the need to discuss it at another time, instead of deny it for a year.

- ii. Motion to table instead made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Garner.
- iii. All members voted in favor.

Lynn Swanson, La Porte County Coroner

Ms. Swanson stated of the 417 coroner calls last year for service, 57 of those ended up being doctor signed, which we still responded to the home and contacted the doctor. The overdose stats are 56, up from 42 last year. Of those, 29 were from Michigan City, 9 were from the City of La Porte and 18 were in the county. There were 11 homicides and 34 suicides, both of those numbers are up as well. The 417 calls that we responded to, there were 340 that were responded to the prior year. She hopes to hire another deputy this year. She noted that it takes about 6 months to get them trained and on the road.

Larry Levendowski, Director of Facilities

Mr. Levendowski stated he wanted to start out by giving a report on the FMEC part of things. He knows there were questions at the past couple of the meetings on the spending at the Fairgrounds and he wanted to update the Council. The total from 2018 to 2021 that was appropriated was \$894,002. The total spent to date at the Fairgrounds is \$891,521.64. The first 2 years, 2018 and 2019, went through the Commissioner's office and was done on underground, such as sewer, water and electrical underground. The last 2 years, 2020 and 2021, went through the Council and FMEC. Everything was put into infrastructure, so that is where those monies went to.

He stated that as discussed over the budget hearings, he put a budget together. He was asked by the FMEC to get a budget together of improvements that they can do throughout the year. He noted that he did get an estimated cost of \$161,050. So, they are asking the Council up to June 1st trying to get all this done. He mentioned that he didn't think they would get every bit of it done; however, they will try to get as much of it done as they can. They are asking the Council for \$175,000 for the Fairgrounds. He noted that last year when he came before the Council they were asked about the asphalt. We did hold off on one whole section of asphalt. That is not included in that, that's the additional \$191,379. He stated that they did reach out to two of their vendors, Rieth-Riley and Milestone. Milestone did have a better price. He noted that they were asking early, because he wants to get the planning together and he doesn't want to wait until the fair comes in July. They want to be ready by the 1st of June. He asked for approval for a motion of support for a total of \$266,379.

Mrs. Gramarossa commented that she requested this information because she receives a lot of phone calls asking her questions about all of these projects going on at the Fairgrounds, that the taxpayers don't see. She noted that she isn't saying that the money isn't being spent at the Fairgrounds; however, it is difficult to understand when you have fencing listed 5 times. Maybe put what area this fencing is going into. So, when she receives the phone calls, she can explain to them what is going on and where the money is being spent. It doesn't matter what department is spending money; the taxpayers just want to understand where their money is going to.

Mr. Levendowski replied that they now have drawings of the grounds, that make it much better to understand where things are going.

Mr. Cunningham agreed that it would be much easier to understand if it said 300 foot of fencing in the grand stand area or 100 foot in the draft horse area, rather than it saying fencing, fencing, fencing. He then asked what kind of the revenue was generated by the Christmas Lights show put on at the Fairgrounds. Mr. Rosenbaum, who is a FMEC board member, stated that the FMEC had contracted for a specified amount of revenue that they would receive the first of the year, so that we didn't take any risk

on the show. The people that ran the show did lose a little bit of money; however, they paid the Fairgrounds a flat \$10,000. If there were any repairs or utility bills, they paid the utility bills or half of the bills were coming from Duff Entertainment, and the other half was coming from the group, Magic of Lights. So, the bills were covered, because those were the most expensive things going on.

Mr. Novak stated there was a revenue sharing split mechanism in that agreement; however, the promoters didn't make money to where it would have kicked in for FMEC.

Mrs. Gramarossa asked when they do collect revenue, how much of that revenue goes back into improvements? Mr. Novak replied that the rental that is collected, goes for administrative costs and repairs. Of the \$891,000 that was received from the county, 100 % of that money went into the Fairgrounds. Not a penny of it paid personnel or anything else. He explained that the rent that they get from the ground lease, cell tower lease that the commissioners have given us, rental agreement that we have with the fair board, and other events that we have, is what generates and pays all of the administrative costs at the Fairgrounds.

Mrs. Gramarossa asked you're just collecting enough for the administrative fees? Is there a surplus, or no? Mr. Rosenbaum answered that right now there is currently a surplus and part of that is restricted funds of \$36,000 and some change for signage. They are going to be putting out a new sign and received a donation from Horizon Bank to do that. So, they didn't include that. Otherwise, they were very close to a break even for the year.

Mr. Novak stated that they can provide a budget.

Mr. Rosenbaum stated they discussed at the last meeting annual revenues, expenses and improvements. Also, prior to that they came to do the budget for 2022; however, that does not have the improvements on there. They estimated how much might be coming from the Council. As it was mentioned before, anything that comes from the Council goes directly to improvements and not for anything else.

Mr. Novak stated that is categorized as infrastructure money and the other money is administrative money. They use that money also for improvements, if they need to. They don't take any administrative costs out of the county money; every penny is put right back into the Fairgrounds.

Mr. Cunningham stated that he spent a portion of almost every day at the Fairgrounds. There was a tremendous number of people saying how good the Fairgrounds looked. There has definitely been an improvement over the last 10 to 15 years; bathrooms and walkways are cleaner. He also noted that it was a fabulous job of people coming along picking up trash. There is no doubt in his mind that they take personal pride.

Mr. Novak mentioned that painting of the buildings and other cosmetics are the things that you are going to start seeing. A lot of the infrastructure that was put in at the beginning was underground or above-ground, that you didn't see it, such as water, sewer, electric and grease traps.

Mr. Garner commented that all this was done for the safety of all the people that attend the fair and Fairgrounds though the year. That's why we started it and moved forward the way we did.

Mr. Rosenbaum noted that it has definitely been a process. Now that some of the facilities have been updated, it makes it easier to rent. He also noted that the other thing that makes it easier to rent is the water and electric in the camping area. It makes a huge difference; it has almost doubled the size of what they could rent out.

Mrs. Gramarossa asked if they could get a forecast when they think the Fairgrounds will support itself...in a year, 2 years, 3 years, 8 years, 10 years?

Mr. Novak stated that the Fairgrounds are owned by the county. For major repairs, they also put in an ARP request of \$1.5 million. It depends on how fast the Council provides money. These are major things, like the grand stands.

Mrs. Gramarossa asked so as of today they have no projected dates?

Mr. Rosenbaum stated that they are at a break even at this point and they believe they will probably be at a positive state for 2022. For the simple reason that the budget breaks out to a break even. They just can't tell what their rentals will be; all that they know is that they have been increasing.

Mr. Novak commented that right now, if they made no more improvements and left it the way it is, they're even. So, they're generating enough money right now to cover the administrative costs. They don't have enough money to make repairs. There will never be enough money generated in there to make \$1.5 million in repairs. For example, Porter County's budget at the time they met with them was \$500,000; they don't even cover that over there with the expo center and all they have.

Mrs. Gramarossa commented that they can't compare to Porter County.

Mr. Novak replied that is the closest one.

Auditor Stabosz stated that from a financial management perspective, the county is seeking to do something different the last few years that truly will be bringing business and an income over there. It is a fine line. On one hand, the Council is putting faith in the FMEC to manage and seek to invest. The financial responsibility to see what a certain investment is doing specific to any project or long-range business relationship to another company is up to the Council to oversee, while giving appropriate latitude to the FMEC and its administrator to manage day to day.

- i. Motion of support for \$366,379 made by Mr. Garner and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

Separately, Mr. Levendowski stated that they are working on the move at the Michigan City Courthouse. He wanted to send a big thank you to the movers, house keepers, IT Department, his maintenance personnel, and all the departments over there. Everyone has worked together very well. Treasurer Winski has done a wonderful job overseeing everything.

Mr. Yagelski asked how do we stand on bidding out of the janitorial services for 2022?

Mr. Levendowski replied that they have not put it out for bid; we have worked our own people. He wanted to wait and talk with his liaison.

Mr. Yagelski commented with all this controversy of 2021, he believed it would be a great idea to bring in a janitorial service. He asked why did they decide to cancel out? They bypassed the budgetary process again. They assumed they were going to continue the contract. That's what the commissioners wanted to do. He would like to send his word out to the commissioners and say let's get this thing bid out again for 2022 without the problems they had for 2021.

Mr. Novak mentioned that maybe he could get on their next agenda and tell them the Council requests that he come back.

John Boyd, La Porte County Sheriff

Sheriff Boyd stated that at the Sheriff's Office, their merit division is short. They had 2 retire last year and they hired replacements. One of the new hires won't be available to be out on his own until August. He noted that last week they received two letters of resignation. One was a sergeant that has about 15 years of service; he is going into private industry. The other is one of the deputies that is on midnights and has about 4 years of service. He is going to the Munster Police Department. When he walks out, he is automatically getting a \$7,000 a year raise and that doesn't include the incentives of specialty pay that may go with that. So, with these anticipated departures, they posted for applications, but haven't received a single application to date. He said it is ironic that the same day we are accepting applications, the South Bend Police Department announced they are accepting applications as well. South Bend for the first year is offering an individual \$57,985 and that doesn't include specialty pay and incentive pay after the first year. When they start their second year, their pay goes to \$65,576. The Crown Point Police Department just announced they are accepting applications as well. Starting pay is \$59,000; however, after the first 90 days the salary goes up to \$67,466. That doesn't include specialty pay and incentive pay. They also offer incentives such as holiday pay and time-and-a-half. So, that's what our department is competing with. This is an issue of urgency.

Additionally, he noted our department realized, sometime late November or early December, that there was a group that had been left out that were as much front-line employees as our merit deputies. Those very important members are Courthouse security and garage mechanics. Sheriff Boyd spoke to the auditor about it, who said he wasn't sure as well. He looked back at the minutes and suggested that I come before the Council to see if you could clarify and clean it up a bit. Sheriff Boyd talked to Councilman Mollenhauer who indicated that he made a motion about it. The garage mechanics are in and out of EMS vehicles that have transported Covid positive patients, our coroner vehicle that has been transporting Covid positive deceased people, all patrol vehicles, and the EMA vehicles that were transporting Covid positive patients that didn't have a way to get to hospitalization. Larry Butcher was transporting them and our garage mechanics put the shield in there. Our Courthouse security, as well, they truly are frontline employees, they're meeting and greeting everyone that is coming into our Courthouse and county buildings when many others were furloughed; they were here every day and didn't miss any work unless they were Covid positive. They were screening those that should and shouldn't be here. I ask for clarification and ask for your consideration for all of our frontline employees, which include those 9, Courthouse security and our garage mechanics.

Mr. Yagelski commented that this was not a frontline raise. It was for the people that the county was trying to get into employment right now. It's not for security or the garage. He noted he went up there to talk to the Sheriff's Department about the motion. It was just a motion for your officers.

Sheriff Boyd replied he was under the understanding it was for frontline.

Mr. Yagelski stated that it was a commissioner that made that motion and they don't run our meetings and that the Council made a separate motion. That's why he gave the additional money to it. It was for officers that they and EMS were trying to hire.

Sheriff Boyd replied that it's important that they put good people in Courthouse security.

Mr. Yagelski stated that it's also good that we're trying to do one thing at a time. Everybody understood when he walked back there, they even said thank you.

Sheriff Boyd stated that while they appreciate the raise, the others should be included as well.

Mr. Mollenhauer stated that he was the one that made the motion for 5 % and that was passed. Then Councilman Yagelski made the motion for 6% for sheriff and EMS. He believed it was stated that it excluded clerical staff. That's how he voted on it; that wouldn't be Courthouse security or mechanics.

Mr. Yagelski commented that the frontline was the officers and EMS frontline officers, not their staff and not anybody else...not the people doing warrants, nothing else...just frontline people.

Mrs. Gramarossa noted that they asked the department heads how many people they had out on the streets. And they gave them those numbers.

Mr. Yagelski stated they are not frontline.

Sheriff Boyd replied that saying they are not frontline is insulting.

Attorney DiMartino suggested pulling the November video and reviewing it. Then revisit the issue based on what was on the video.

Tony Rodriguez, Community and Economic Development

Mr. Rodriguez noted that both private entities, Surf Broadband and Acme Communications, made the filing deadline that was necessary to submit grant applications that will leverage the necessary \$10.5 million of fiber optics to homes that are currently unserved. He thanked Jay Sullivan for last minute assistance for getting the applications completed, and Matt Reardon, who was kind enough to help him make the deadline.

LIAISON REPORTS

Mr. Garner stated that he met with the Recorder and they are going good, same for clerks. Sheriff just spoke on the issues. Assessor brought him up to date on Michigan Township Trustee and the issues he is having and it has been tabled. He mentioned that he received a couple of calls on County Highway employees that retired last year. These employees stayed through the 1st of last year and they felt they were deserving of some of the bonus money. Mr. Garner wanted to bring it up to see if anyone else had comments on how to handle it or where he should go with it.

Mrs. Gramarossa stated that she spoke with departments and everything is running well; there are no issues.

Mr. Mollenhauer stated that he attended a virtual meeting on January 20th with NIRPC. The other item in the past 2 to 3 weeks, he met with Mr. Novak and Mr. Cunningham and they have been discussing possible salary adjustments for EMS and, of course, that is on tonight's agenda.

Mr. Cunningham stated he will pass on giving a liaison report due to the long department head reports and late hour.

Mr. Yagelski stated the group is moving along with the new Courthouse and we are supposed to have a meeting for the data board on social media.

Mr. Rosenbaum talked about the Assessors' offices best plan for replacing some Michigan Township employees and under whose supervision and training it would be. He said it is clear that the Michigan Township area represents just around 25% of the property values and the number of properties. Therefore, it is important to get people to properly oversee that and it is also important to get the work done there. He said they are going to continue to work on that. Separately, he noted the RDC will have its next meeting on the upcoming Wednesday.

Mr. Novak stated he attended the last RDC meeting, a couple of FMEC meetings, Animal Control board, and on the Michigan City Courthouse, we meet twice a week on the move back that Larry Levendowski reported on and he is also constantly in contact with the Health Department.

Mr. Rosenbaum added that he spent a lot of time on FMEC getting all the financials for the Council. It took a lot to get all that together and the budget and the reporting process.

CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence, per Auditor Stabosz.

ORDINANCES & RESOLUTIONS

Ordinance No. 2022-01 – Salary Ordinance

- i. Motion to read by title only made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

Auditor Stabosz read: An Ordinance Adopting County of La Porte, Indiana Salary Schedule and Compensation Policies.

- iii. Motion to approve made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.
- iv. All members voted in favor.

Resolution No. 2022-01A – Dwyer Instruments - Declaratory

- i. Motion to read by title only made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Garner.

Auditor Stabosz read: This is a resolution of the La Porte County Council identifying and declaring portions of La Porte County, Indiana be designated as an Economic Revitalization Area pursuant to IC Code 6-1.1-12.1-1.

Mr. Tony Rodriguez of Economic Development asked that the resolution be heard on both 1st and 2nd reading and a public hearing would need to be scheduled. His hope is to schedule a detailed workshop at which Dwyer will present a full application for Property Tax Abatement.

Mr. Novak noticed that it was an ordinance on the agenda and not a resolution. He asked that it be corrected.

Mr. Yagelski asked what the difference is between the TIF and what they were asking for now.

Mr. Rodriguez answered with property tax abatement, ERA designation enables a company within the area to apply for property tax abatement. Tax increment finance is another statutory step requirement and procedure.

Mr. Yagelski asked what the difference is between an economic revitalization zone and TIF.

Mr. Rodriguez answered with a TIF, you're establishing an area for purposes of revitalization and enabling an entity to have authority and bonding capability and to make set improvements within that jurisdiction that will benefit long term...the total overall assessed value within that jurisdiction then affecting the whole taxing unit.

Economic Revitalization is a much more specific targeted look that is used in the State of Indiana for considering property tax abatement.

- i. Motion made by Mr. Yagelski to read both 1st and 2nd.

Attorney DiMartino stated that Mr. Yagelski should make a motion to declare it an Economic Revitalization Area. Then you set a public hearing and hear from everybody and then at that time you read it a 2nd time and confirm it.

- ii. Motion made by Mr. Yagelski to proceed accordingly and seconded by Mr. Garner.
- iii. All members voted in favor.

Attorney DiMartino asked if the Council wanted to set a date for a public hearing, so the notices can go out.

Mr. Novak replied with a date of February 28th, 2022, the next Council meeting.

Resolution 2022-01B – OTECH Corporation - Declaratory

- i. Motion made by Mr. Rosenbaum to read by title only and seconded by Mrs. Gramarossa.

Auditor Stabosz read: This is a resolution of the La Porte County Council identifying and declaring portions of La Porte County, Indiana be designated as an Economic Revitalization Area pursuant to IC code 6-1.1-12.1-1.

- ii. Motion made by Mr. Rosenbaum to move forward and declare an Economic Revitalization Area and have a public hearing and the 2nd reading and seconded by Mrs. Gramarossa.
- iii. All members voted in favor.

Mr. Cunningham stated he agreed with Mr. Yagelski, the word "area" is confusing because we are just giving authority to a specific business, not the area around the business.

Attorney DiMartino noted that the property will be platted when it next comes before you.

Mr. Cunningham asked if it will be one owner?

Attorney DiMartino answered yes.

NEW BUSINESS

1. La Porte Mayor Tom Dermody gave a Public Safety LIT presentation.

Questions for State Representative Jim Pressel:

Mr. Yagelski asked if the US Treasurer just announced that we could spend \$10 million of ARP money on whatever we want?

Mr. Pressel answered that he was not the “go to guy” on those funds.

Mr. Yagelski asked what would it take for us to put the Public Safety LIT on a referendum for the voters?

Mr. Pressel answered that Indiana isn’t a referendum state, and that he didn’t know if it is eligible for a referendum.

Mr. Rosenbaum asked where Mr. Pressel thought the business personal property tax was headed. Did he feel it would be a minor reduction or full removal?

Mr. Pressel answered that he didn’t believe the Senate had the will to remove it. However, there may be a reduction or adjustment or maybe nothing happens.

Mr. Cunningham asked if there were any restrictions in state law that would prohibit the county from putting the LIT on a ballot this spring.

Mr. Pressel answered he will check with the attorneys there and let Mr. Cunningham know.

Questions for Mayor Dermody:

Mr. Yagelski stated that in the last 5 years property values have gone up in La Porte County, due to multiple things...economic, people moving here from out of the area, etc. One of the things you have to do to get tax increases is to vote for this or hopefully you have population growth, people spending money, your house value goes up. The value of our property has gone up almost \$50,000. So, instead of a \$50,000 house you have a \$100,000 house. He noted the county doesn’t receive one dime from that increase.

Paige Sansone from Baker Tilly, the City of La Porte’s financial advisor on the LIT, made comment that all taxing units in the State have a maximum amount of property tax that you are allowed to raise. If assessments go up and property values go up, that doesn’t mean you are going to generate additional revenues because you are capped. There is a misconception that when you have new housing additions, industry or commercial property, that you are going to reap additional revenue.

Mr. Yagelski stated that a LIT increase solves the problem for this year, but how do we solve our problem the next year and the year after that?

Auditor Stabosz made the comment that it does solve the problem permanently, as long as you keep the rate in place.

Mr. Yagelski stated that the rate in place will need to substantially increase as county salaries go up.

Auditor Stabosz stated as taxpayer incomes go up, they would pay higher taxes to pay those county salaries.

Auditor Stabosz stated that a previous salary study 5 years ago suggested many positions needed their salaries to be raised 9%, to match the peer group. We already calculated at our budget hearings that it was \$350,000 for each 1 %. So, if there is a 9% increase that was needed 5 years ago, and we have generally kept up with inflation since then, we are 9% underpaid and it's \$350,000 times 9 is \$3.2 million, which is ½ of the amount generated from a 0.50% public safety LIT. The other thing the Council would need to discuss with Baker Tilly, is the Public Safety LIT the way to go or are there other ways that would give us more flexibility.

Mr. Yagelski stated he thinks there is going to be a bidding war for jobs and that he didn't think we could survive a bidding war. He then asked what the mayor thought the Council could do to solve the long-term process; this is a short-term process.

Mayor Dermody answered the county has some loyal individuals in the Sheriff's and Fire Department and they don't want to leave La Porte. Their concern is that they are putting themselves in danger with only 4 people on a shift. They also want to get closer to a more competitive salary, something that shows we respect them. Therefore, instead of 4 people on the shift they will have 8 people on a shift and have back up. He also stated that you have to grow your assessment and start setting new standards. We are going to have less of a loss from the circuit breakers if we grow our assessment.

LaPorte City Police Chief Chris Brecher stated they are down 6 officers. You think everyday someone else is going to leave. He noted that it's not all about the money. It includes the equipment; it's about everything. We are taxpayers too; we are all going to pay into the LIT.

Paige Sansone made a comment that local income tax can be a long-term fix. It is a permanent tax if you adopt it at a certain percentage, unless the Council changes it. So, this is a way to get a substantial amount of revenue into the county for public safety.

2.  La Porte County Assessor – Request permission to pay per-diem for Michigan Township reassessment.

Assessor Mike Schultz informed the Council that Michigan Township missed their 1st deadline for reassessments; it was supposed to be done December 31st. There are still roughly 511 parcels that need to be reviewed. Most of those parcels are in the Long Beach/Lake Michigan area. He has about 72 splits, combines, and transfers that need to be finished by February 1st. There are 125 sale disclosures that haven't been looked at and entered; those are due by February 1st. He also, stated that in his 12 years, his office has never missed a deadline. His office notified The Department of Local Government Finance that Michigan Township was told they had to do their own work back in October or November. He also informed them that they weren't getting cooperation from Michigan Township. Assessor Schultz said his staff would like to be allotted a stipend of about \$30/day for any work they have to do to catch Michigan Township up. It should only take about 30 to 45 days. He noted he would give a report of their progress at the end of the 45 days, and that the Deputy Assessor doesn't see an issue with getting Michigan Township done within that time period. There will probably be about 7 individuals in his office

working on the Michigan Township parcels. He mentioned that it would probably be less than \$10,000, and it would come out of his part time help with reassessment money.

Mr. Yagelski commented to table it for 30 days, because they haven't got together yet.

Mr. Novak asked if they were considering it a retroactive bonus?

Assessor Schultz answered yes.

Mr. Yagelski stated with his motion last time, they were supposed to get together and find out who is going to take responsibility; it is not your fault.

- i. Motion to table made by Mr. Yagelski.
- ii. Motion failed for lack of a second.

Mr. Cunningham stated that since he is using funds he already has, set a cap at \$10,000.

- iii. Motion made by Mr. Cunningham and seconded by Mr. Garner

Mr. Yagelski asked Attorney DiMartino what recourse do we have to get this money back? Do we take it out of the Michigan Township Assessor's salary or take it out of his budget and close his budget out for the year?

Attorney DiMartino stated that they weren't going to be able to change his budget this year; however, they can change it for next year. This has been an ongoing problem that they need to get resolved. First, they have to do what Mr. Schultz wants and second, they have to resolve this issue with the Michigan Township Assessor's office. He will look into it.

Auditor Stabosz asked if they will work the entire day in Michigan Township or on a single property for the \$30?

Assessor Schultz commented that if they are working on the project, 2 or 3 hours. They would be taking time away from his office. No overtime.

Auditor Stabosz asked if it was going to be an incremental \$30 over their regular pay?

Assessor Schultz answered yes, we are talking that someone might make \$900 on this over 45 days.

Mr. Cunningham asked if they would be doing something for Michigan Township over their regular duties.

Assessor Schultz answered yes. The other route would be doing it hourly and that is a lot more. Hourly at the \$30/day/hr. would be \$4.50/hr.

Mr. Rosenbaum commented if they are only working their normal hours, then switched to do a different project, why are they getting paid extra?

Assessor Schultz commented that's like saying, why did we give Michigan Township bonuses for not doing their work?

Attorney DiMartino stated that legally he can't capture how this is, if they are employed 40 hours a week and 10 hours a week is doing the other work.

Mr. Novak told Mr. Schultz do what you have to do, then come back here. He said he agreed that these employees should be compensated for doing what the other people didn't get done.

Assessor Schultz commented yes, we will get it done.

Mr. Novak commented to Mr. Schultz to have a more realistic number of what it took for you to get it done.

Mrs. Gramarossa stated that the confusing part is working 8 hours and doing this as well.

Auditor Stabosz asked if they would be paid per property by Michigan Township because they are down two employees?

Mr. Rosenbaum commented that it depends on where the funding comes from; it is something they can discuss. The problem now is there is a shortage of two people. He didn't want to hire until there was an understanding on how it was going to work. It has been a problem for them to get together on this matter. The assessor's office right now is trying to figure out how we reward the people that are doing "normal" work, instead of staying over an hour a day.

Mr. Novak noted that it would be considered time and half.

Mr. Cunningham commented that they are going to work during breaks and lunch hour. Mr. Schultz is coming to us and saying he has to get this job done; it is going to cost less than \$10,000. He is not asking for any money; he already has it. He is simply asking can he do this by giving a \$30 stipend.

Assessor Schultz noted that they are going to keep a work log. They need to know what they are doing, because some will be doing commercial, residential, and some will be cleaning up mobiles and personal property. It's not something they are going to have their whole day pledged to.

Mr. Cunningham stated that Mr. Schultz has cut his budget over the years by not replacing people that have left.

Mr. Novak stated that they can't do it on their breaks and lunch because they would be subject to time and half.

Mr. Yagelski commented that when they come back, bring the bill and we will pay it.

Auditor Stabosz commented as an alternative, calculate a percent of total that you do in Michigan township, and that amount, as a ratio, can be transferred from the Michigan Township Assessor's budget to your budget.

Mr. Schultz replied that there is maybe \$5,000 in his budget.

Mrs. Gramarossa asked Attorney DiMartino what can we do to force the Michigan Township Assessor to do his job?

Attorney DiMartino answered that isn't the issue right now. The issue is that we need to get the work done and he doesn't see a mechanism right now to do it.

Mr. Cunningham stated that in reality they are voting on that they trust Mr. Schultz and they are asking Mr. Schultz to trust the Council a month from now.

Attorney DiMartino stated the issue is how are they going to classify it? They can't increase their hourly wage; they are working overtime. That's where he is having the issue legally. Not that they don't deserve it; not that they aren't going to do all the work. We are all for it. It's not that we don't trust Mr. Schultz.

Mr. Novak commented that if it were simple, they would be done with it.

Assessor Schultz commented that he is concerned the Council says they can pay it at the end but not at the beginning. What is the difference? He thought it was only the elected official's salary that can't change in a year.

Attorney DiMartino stated they approved the salary ordinance and they would have to go back and adjust the salary ordinance for these folks and they don't even know how much it's going to be or how long or what they're going to do. This is compensation for this and its compensation during the same time they are working. He is not saying it's not a good idea; he is just not sure of the mechanism right now.

Auditor Stabosz stated that they should probably get a pledge from the Council that if that's what it has to be, that's what you should get.

Attorney DiMartino commented that he can't promise it.

Assessor Schultz commented if that's the case, what prevents my staff from working overtime?

Mr. Novak commented if he was saying his staff is going to work "x" amount of overtime to do that, they would just allow him to take money out of the account for overtime.

Mr. Mollenhauer commented they would need to work overtime and not just say it.

Assessor Schultz stated that when they leave, they're gone; then you have to find another individual that's a Level 2 or 3. They're not out to cheat.

Mr. Mollenhauer commented that they know his staff does a good job; he does a good job. That's not the question; it's if it is legal or not, and he doesn't think it's legal.

Attorney DiMartino noted it would have to be overtime.

Auditor Stabosz asked if the schedules can be waived for special purposes?

Mr. Novak asked if it would be possible, when they are done, to give a bonus for doing extra work.

Attorney DiMartino commented that it was not extra work; it's work they should not be doing.

Assessor Schultz suggested that they take their regular pay and cut Michigan Township by 50%, because they aren't doing their job.

Attorney DiMartino stated that it would need to be taken to HR to see if this is some type of issue that they can be fired on, but this is an HR issue.

Assessor Schultz noted that the board has final say on classification.

Mr. Novak asked if he was talking about Job Classification?

Assessor Schultz answered yes.

- i. Motion withdrawn by Mr. Cunningham due to the advice of legal counsel.
- ii. Second withdrawn by Mr. Garner.
- iii. Motion to table for 30 days made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.
- iv. 5 members voted in favor (Mr. Yagelski, Mr. Rosenbaum, Mr. Novak, Mrs. Gramarossa and Mr. Garner) and 2 members voted against (Mr. Mollenhauer and Mr. Cunningham).
- v. Motion to pass word to the Commissioners to write up the Michigan Township Assessor made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Mollenhauer.
- vi. All members voted in favor.

Mr. Yagelski interjected the following:

- i. Motion to request the 12 units of local government that would benefit from a Public Safety LIT tax increase pass a resolution to support or reject the tax in their community at their next fiscal body meeting made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Cunningham.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

- 3. Consider approval of Council President's authorization to hire replacement position for:
 - a. La Porte County Clerk – Deputy
 - b. La Porte County Highway – Hanna Operator Position
 - i. Motion to approve both positions a and b above made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Mollenhauer.
 - ii. All members voted in favor.
 - c. La Porte County Emergency Management Agency Office – COMOT V Executive Assistant; Homeland Security Position
 - i. Motion to approve and noted that Rob Sabie is the individual taking the job by Mr. Cunningham and seconded by Mr. Mollenhauer.
 - ii. All members voted in favor.

- 4. Redevelopment Commission –
 - a. Requesting favorable vote for US 421/300 N water/sewer project for \$2 million

Consultant Matt Reardon stated that \$250,000 is from the Michigan City Water Department, \$180,000 from existing property owners, and \$2.2 million from tax increment finance. They are asking to use the funds. There are no carrying costs.

Mr. Rosenbaum stated that this is infrastructure money for water and sewer. When this funding became available, it was not something they had numbers for until now. The process took a long time to get to this point.

- i. Motion of support by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Mollenhauer.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

Mr. Reardon was asked to explain questions from the meeting at PNW. He stated there were questions about how does the water work. The water department has agreed

hook up residents for free while the project is going. If you are on 950 or adjacent to the project, Michigan City is just putting the tap on the road side for free.

He also stated that for sanitation they wanted to make the residents with a septic aware that, when their septic fails, they can tap into the system.

Mr. Garner asked what other options did they have for funding?

Mr. Reardon stated there were no other options. They used tax increment finance, contributions made by the Michigan City Water Department, existing TIF money, and existing businesses that were in the area chipped in.

Mr. Garner asked versus taking the ARP money, what other options would they have?

Mr. Reardon stated to be honest, not to do the project. He also commented that what they do know is there is a \$17-million-dollar project this will facilitate.

Auditor Stabosz asked how is it that just because we have extra money in the ARP, this investment is justified now?

Mr. Novak answered that they were going to come to the Council and ask for it out of another account.

Mrs. Gramarossa asked if this is a project that has been going on since 2018.

Mr. Reardon answered by saying it is longer than that.

b. Requesting favorable vote for Hwy 35/I-94 water/sewer project for \$1,500,000

Mr. Reardon informed the Council there are estimated investments of \$2 million in tax increments. There is a short fall of \$1.5 million that they are working with right now. This is for the developers to purchase the bonds. Funds are used to leverage tax increments, finance and contributions from Michigan City Water, and to create other jobs.

Mr. Yagelski asked if anyone is contributing?

Mr. Reardon answered by saying just a gas station is contributing. The difference between the 2 projects, one is based on user fees paying into a system, this one is based on property taxes generated by the investment by the private sector and TIFers. The sources of debt repayment are different.

Mr. Rosenbaum commented that in this TIF district, it does reach close to areas near Michigan City Airport. There is a lot of privately owned property around the area of the Michigan City Airport that would benefit by us extending the water down that way.

- i. Motion of support made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mrs. Gramarossa.
- ii. 5 members voted in favor (President Novak, Mr. Cunningham, Mr. Mollenhauer, Mr. Rosenbaum and Mrs. Gramarossa) and 2 members voted not-in-favor (Mr. Garner and Mr. Yagelski).

5. Discussion on Liaison Assignments for 2022

- i. Motion to hold off made by Mr. Cunningham and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

6. La Porte County Highway Department – Requesting to hire a fourth bridge tender

Highway Superintendent Duane Werner informed the Council that the 3 bridge tenders for 2021 made \$11.30/hr., with total cost of about \$90,000. The 5% raise had raised them up to \$11.94/hr., with a total cost of about \$93,000. They talked about changing the shift work before to eliminate a lot of the over time. Currently, with only 3 bridge tenders, they work 7 days a week, with 8 hr. shifts. So, there is 16 hrs. of over time per week. That is a total of 32 hrs. of over time per pay period. We took a look at adding a 4th bridge tender and working a 12-hr. shift. We talked about paying them \$14/hr., with overall payroll being \$97,000. This would be \$4,000 more than having 3 bridge tenders. Another benefit would be for possible safety issues. Also, with 12-hr. shifts in a 14-day pay period, they would only have to work 7 days.

- i. Motion made to authorize a 4th bridge tender and move their pay to \$14/hr. by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Cunningham.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

Mr. Mollenhauer asked if they discussed the 12-hr. shift with the employees.

Mr. Werner answered yes, with only one person being a little reluctant, and he will be retiring in a year. He said the department believes this will be more appealing to new hires.

7. Update from Michigan Township Trustee and request for additional Rental Assistance funds

Mr. Novak informed the Council that Guy DiMartino, himself, Laverne Childs (Michigan Township Office Manager), and Trustee Rodney Washington had a meeting a couple Saturdays ago and went through all the funds (The Michigan Township Trustee was given \$10,000 initially.) Everything was accounted for and they still have roughly \$2,300 left.

- i. Motion to give an additional \$9,000 made by Mr. Cunningham and seconded by Mr. Yagelski.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

Mr. Rosenbaum asked Ms. Childs if she was also trying to apply for those state funds for each and every one of these.

She answered yes; they have been working with their clients trying to fill out the applications.

Mrs. Gramarossa thanked Ms. Childs and told her she thinks she has been doing a wonderful job.

8. Update from Center Township on Rental Assistance

Township Trustee Lisa Pierzakowski informed the Council that \$33,000 has been spent and there is \$16,000 left; this is for 6 different townships. They have 3 cases open in Kankakee, 2 in Scipio, 6 in Coolspring and 1 in Center. She also stated that they have 18 IDAC applications open.

- i. Motion to give \$9,000 made by Mr. Cunningham and seconded by Mr. Yagelski.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

9. Animal Control

Mr. Novak stated that every time an animal is adopted, \$30 goes into the spay and neuter account. The purpose of that account was to help pay for an animal to be spayed or neutered. They have been paying the in-house veterinarian out of the donation account, instead of taking it out of the spay and neuter account. He believes the ordinance that captures the \$30 is out of date.

Attorney DiMartino commented that the ordinance is from 1991 when they had outside vendors that were doing the work. They have brought everything in-house and so this money was sitting in the spay and neuter account. The problem with the ordinance is that it is a reverting ordinance, where the money is supposed to go back to the General Fund. He recommended that the money be transferred to the donation account to make up for the money that has been taken out of the donation account and that we rework the ordinance this year. He said they can use the spay and neuter account, but they should be paying the vet's salary out of the spay and neuter account.

Mr. Rosenbaum queried that since there is an ordinance on the books, can they legally do it without changing the ordinance first?

Attorney DiMartino answered yes, you can do it because the money should have originally been taken out of the funds. They took it out of the wrong fund and all we are doing is replenishing the fund.

- i. Motion to replenish Donation Fund from General Fund made by Mr. Cunningham and seconded by Mr. Mollenhauer.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Budget approval for Funds 4909 and 9107 – La Porte County Community Corrections

Mr. Novak stated that this is approving grant money from the state. Originally, when they submitted their budget, they didn't have any numbers in there.

Director Rochelle Brown stated it is all grant funded; it is taken out of series 1 to put into series 3 just to balance out the account to bring everything to a zero balance instead of a negative balance.

- i. Motion to approve made by Mr. Cunningham and seconded by Mrs. Gramarossa.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

2. EMS Pay

Mr. Mollenhauer stated that present pay for EMS is \$12.72. He noted it was discussed at the Council's budget hearings a couple months ago for a range of \$13 to \$15 pay for EMS employees. It should be noted that EMS employees work 56-hr. per week. In 2021 EMS overtime cost us \$118,436. The overtime budget is \$105,000 and until recently EMS would have to come before us to get an additional \$40,000 to \$50,000 a year. They have 3 open unfilled positions, add that to COVID and work comp injuries; they are behind, just trying to get these rigs going he said. We are looking at \$13, \$14 or \$15 per hour. We can't put an exact figure on

it right now. However, \$13/hr. would probably be an increase in the budget of about \$73,000, \$14/hr. would be around \$150,000 and \$15/hr. would probably be \$300,000 [sic].

EMS Administrator, Andrew McGuire, commented their 100 Account would absorb about \$60,000 to \$75,000 of that expense. So, that is just a rough estimate.

- i. Motion to pay \$14/hr. made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.

Mr. Mollenhauer commented he would really like to see \$15/hr., because we all know what kind of situation EMS is in and we need to show these employees we're trying to help and trying to retain them. He thinks \$15/hr. would probably put them close to anything competitive in this area.

Mr. Garner said he agrees with Mr. Mollenhauer.

Mr. Cunningham said he supports it.

Mr. McGuire commented that \$15/hr. would resolve EMS's issues, help it be competitive to attract applicants, and retain the employees we have.

Mr. Yagelski rescinds his motion for \$14/hr. along with Mr. Rosenbaum.

- i. Amended motion to pay \$15/hr. base pay made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

Auditor Stabosz asked if everyone in the EMS department is going up the same \$2.28/hr.

EMS answered by saying they would have to roll it out, all the way up the line.

Mr. Cunningham commented that half of the ARP funds are going into lost revenue. If we take \$1.5 million and set it aside now, we cover it for the next 5 years. Then figure out a way to pay for it 5 years from now, if we don't have any other money left. We don't have to spend the ARP lost revenue until 2026.

Mrs. Gramarossa commented that this is going to be a promise that we made. She indicated she thought it was going to be the fix.

Auditor Stabosz asked if their schedule proposed \$2.28 across the board, or is it the same percentage increase for everyone?

Mr. McGuire answered that it is not a percentage.

Mr. Novak stated it will be effective next pay period.

Mr. Cunningham asked if this applies to their paramedics and EMTs, not their common staff people?

Mr. McGuire answered that that is correct.

APPROPRIATIONS, TRANSFERS, REQUESTS

Honorable Judge Thomas Alevizos Circuit Court

1. Request to transfer \$5,000 from care of inmates account 1000-30074-000-0148 to payroll account 1000-10211-000-0148 for: Purpose of compensating Mr. Cotman for his services as facilitator for the La Porte Circuit Court for 2022 \$5,000

- i. Motion made by Mrs. Gramarossa and seconded by Mr. Cunningham.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

2. Request approval of the transfer of a secretarial position currently in the Juvenile Probation Department 1000-10111-000-0154, to La Porte Circuit Court 1000-10111-000-0148

Judge Alevizos informed the Council that this is for both magistrates. The one in Michigan City has 2 staff members and the two in La Porte each have a single staff member.

- i. Motion made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mrs. Gramarossa.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

La Porte County Sheriff

1. Requesting Additional Appropriation from ARP (8950 /8951) or General (1000) or Riverboat (1191) for: Merit Pension \$650,447
 - i. Motion to pay out of Riverboat made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Yagelski.
 - ii. 6 members voted in favor (Mr. Mollenhauer abstained).
2. Request permission to spend \$2,300 from K9 donation account 4016.20200.000.0311 for: Miscellaneous supplies and equipment (not to exceed) \$2,300
 - i. Motion to approve made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mrs. Gramarossa.
 - ii. All members voted in favor.

La Porte County Hazmat

Requesting Additional Appropriation from ARP (8950/8951) or General (1000) or Riverboat (1191) for: Matching Grant for Air Pack Bottles, APR Adapters, and filters \$12,000

- i. Motion to pay out of the ARP made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Mollenhauer.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

La Porte County Parks Department

Requesting Additional Appropriation from ARP (8950/8951) or General (1000) or Riverboat (1191) for:

Playground equipment at Red Mill, and two playgrounds at Creek Ridge \$200,000

- i. Motion to pay out of ARP (8951) made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mrs. Gramarossa.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

Mr. Cunningham thanked Parks Department Head, Jeremy Sobecki, for "still sitting here in the audience."

Mr. Sobecki was asked to speak about a possible new park. He stated the potential property that is already owned by the Park Foundation is called Sebert Property on 925 N. He said it would potentially have a trail and a parking lot. It has potential for growth and is a natural area that has plants you don't hardly see anywhere else in the state.

La Porte County E911

Requesting Additional Appropriation from ARP (8950/8951) or General (1000) or Riverboat (1191) for:

1. Motorola Invoice \$45,000

- i. Motion to pay out of the ARP made by Mr. Mollenhauer and seconded by Mrs. Gramarossa.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

2. Equate Renewal Contract (Choose one)

1 Year Contract \$31,056
5 Year Contract \$138,141

Mr. Cunningham stated there are two reasons to take the 5-year contract. First, it will save \$17,000 and second the 1-year contract will increase every year.

- i. Motion to pay out of the General Fund for the 5-year contract made by Mr. Cunningham and seconded by Mr. Mollenhauer.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

3. Mounts and lighting upgrades \$26,305

- i. Motion to pay out of the ARP funds made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mrs. Gramarossa.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

La Porte County Community Corrections

Requesting to transfer \$2,236.86 from Counselor 9106.10188.000.0584 to Maintenance and Repairs 9106.30013.000.0584 for:

Balancing of negative in fund \$2,236.86

- i. Motion made by Mr. Cunningham and seconded by Mr. Yagelski.

- ii. All members voted in favor.

Mr. Rosenbaum commented that they can't let themselves run into a negative balance; they need to manage their money better than that.

La Porte County Surveyor

Requesting to spend from the Surveyor Corner Perpetuation

Fund 1202.20200.000.0271 for:

- | | |
|----------------------|----------|
| 1. Equipment | \$2,210 |
| 2. Supplies | \$1,130 |
| 3. Service contracts | \$70,960 |

Surveyor Anthony Hendricks stated that they do service contracts for all of their software and hardware, and section corner jobs that they get from private industry.

Mr. Novak asked if this was a routine thing? Mr. Hendricks answered they usually spend about \$35,000 to \$40,000 in normal service contracts and about \$20,000 to \$30,000 for section corners from private surveyors.

- i. Motion made to approve by Mrs. Gramarossa and seconded by Mr. Mollenhauer.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

La Porte County Adult Probation

Requesting to spend \$7,500 of Probation User Fees 2102.41007.000.0334 for:

Three new computer and six monitors (not to exceed) \$7,500

- i. Motion made to approve by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

COUNCIL/ATTORNEY COMMENTS

Mr. Garner stated he spoke to two retired county highway employees, and those two retired employees asked if they are able to receive part of the bonus money since they extended their retirement date to cover the county through the winter months. They wanted a clarification if they were eligible.

Mr. Yagelski stated he will find out.

Mr. Cunningham asked if it was on a prorated basis for employment?

Mr. Rosenbaum answered that they had to be an employee at the time the Council passed it.

Mr. Rosenbaum commented that one person that spoke during public comment talked about using different funds from different locations to fund employee pay increases. The problem is those funds are restricted to specific uses. We have long term planning that we are doing on this Council and to suggest that we take money from these funds is actually far-fetched and not realistic. Also, what was suggested was all temporary solutions; not permanent. He said he wasn't going to say anything positive or negative about a LIT increase, but the Public Safety LIT is a designated amount for the safety of the people of La Porte County. We don't take it lightly; we are not going to take it lightly and if we want to talk about reducing costs in other locations, that's when that individual that spoke, can start taking

some positive action and we haven't seen it. Let's start talking and take some positive action of cutting some cost and doing an efficiency study and seeing what we can do to save money there, so we can pay better elsewhere.

Mr. Rosenbaum also commented about another public commenter about wearing masks. He said if somebody chooses to wear a mask that is their choice. He said I have been a substitute teacher for the past 4 months, while I took a break from my CPA work. Those teachers work with hundreds and hundreds of kids every day. I was one of those teachers. I was vaccinated, I got my booster and I did what I was supposed to do. I'm in decent health. If I had health issues, I would wear a mask. So don't lecture me about what I do, but you should not lecture anybody else.

ADJOURNMENT

- i. Motion to adjourn made by Mr. Rosenbaum.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

Examined & Approved by The La Porte County Council this 28th day of March 2022.



Councilman Earl Cunningham



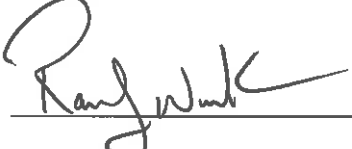
Councilman Terry Garner



Councilwoman Connie Gramarossa



Councilman Mike Mollenhauer



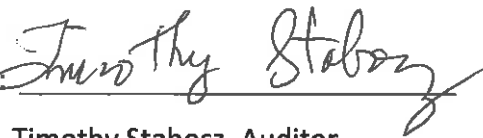
Councilman Randy Novak



Councilman Mike Rosenbaum



Councilman Mark Yagelski

ATTEST 

Timothy Stabosz, Auditor